

# Project 34C

The word is out with the “lunchtime boob jab”. Here, Petale Low gives her personal account on the new, non-invasive, all-natural breast booster.

“**B**irkin or new boobs?” was the million-dollar question often put to my husband who fortunately understood my preference (more, like, predilection) for a 35cm in blue jean *taurillon clemence*. After all, while an Hermès bag is universally revered, well, beautiful breasts are in the eye of the beholder. Unless, of course, you happen to be wearing a sheer, tight, white T-shirt. But this was the epiphany, exactly. One Saturday morning, as I tucked a little sheer tee – you know, the kind that coyly shows up a little lace lingerie – into my J Brand flared jeans, I realised that I could do with a little perking up. Just enough to fill out my nude lace Myla bra tastefully, I thought; there’s nothing tackier than those foam-padded T-shirt bras that give out false illusions. I turned left-front-right,

gave my breasts a little lift, and decided that the bag could wait.

This change in perspective, I must tell you, comes as a surprise. After all, I’ve made a living from the name-calling – Amanda “Transgender in a G” Lepore, Victoria “Basketball Breasts” Beckham – and have always promoted myself as 100 percent all-woman, no highlights, no lipo, and certainly no plastic boobs. The rest of me? Let’s put it this way, I have a membership at Country Farm Organics and only wear 100 percent cotton or silk, so silicone would be as evil a word as polyester. How could I have fallen into this trap – I am but a comfortable 34C – could this be the beginning of the end where I’d sooner be scalpelled than Botoxed? I could blame the three kids, the season’s slashed-to-there necklines, and beautiful French lingerie, but surely 99.9 percent of women cope with their natural breasts

perfectly well. The question is: have they tried wearing a sheer, tight, white T-shirt?

Three weeks later, my answer came in the ‘Diary of a Boob Jab’ by *Harper’s BAZAAR* UK beauty director, Newby Hands. “From B to C, scalpel-free” the cover proclaimed the new, groundbreaking injectable breast filler, Macrolane – positioned as the natural alternative to breasts implants. Think volume and contouring at a needle’s end. Made from synthetic hyaluronic acid that our bodies also naturally produce, administered through local anaesthesia, and completely customised to your preference in size and shape, it sounded too good to be true. Where implants take you up a minimum of one cup, Macrolane goes up to a *maximum* of one cup size. Just like yourself, but better-looking, as one would say.

I made a few enquiries through my global network of friends, and calculated the cost

of “buying” new boobs in London, but that meant factoring in a shopping spree at Harvey Nichols (for new lingerie, of course) which all-in easily added up to two Birkins. This needed serious consideration. Then, through the same grapevine, I heard that the procedure had already launched in Malaysia and Singapore, and before I knew it, had signed up to my first cosmetic treatment.

## Sessions in C

So here I am waiting for Dr Martin Huang, consultant plastic surgeon, in his luxe designer clinic at Paragon in Singapore (when a clinic is located in a premium mall, you know you're in a good place). On the wall stands over 18 certifications, the latest in Macrolane treatment. Dr Huang, after all, is considered the best in the region and a strong believer in minimally invasive surgery, where he often performs endoscopic surgery on the face and breasts.

“Macrolane is, at the moment, a one-of-a-kind product because it's the only soft tissue filler for the breast,” he tells me during our consultation session. “It's a valid alternative to surgical breast augmentation with implants, using hyaluronic acid that has a long and established safety record.” The same ingredient has been used for ten years in popular facial filler Restylane, manufactured by the same Swedish medical company Q-Med, only now in larger particles for use in the breast. To date, about 10,000 women have opted for Macrolane with natural, stable, and safe results.

How safe, I ask Dr Huang. Would he recommend this treatment to his wife? “Yes, if she were interested,” he quickly replies. “Generally, it's a very safe procedure, with no biological side effects. Hyaluronic acid has been used long enough and there are enough clinical studies and professional literature to document the safety. It doesn't increase the risk of breast diseases, nor does it migrate to other parts of the body. It causes no allergies, does not move around, and there's no rejection.”

And with that, does it make obsolete silicone implants, this being the safer and natural option? “It's not a complete alternative,” says Dr Huang, “It has its limitations, the main one being that of size or volume. Realistically, you can go up half to three-quarter cup, whereas with breast augmentation the limits are much higher and that's why this is suitable for patients who desire a relatively modest increase in volume.”

“Your choice for either silicone implants versus Macrolane depends on the results you want to achieve,” says Dr Huang. Size aside, the other main thing to consider is permanence as Macrolane only lasts for two

Where implants take you up a minimum of one cup, Macrolane goes up a maximum of one cup size, so the results are subtle and natural.

to three years, as the filler is naturally and gradually absorbed into surrounding tissues and completely eliminated after three years. So you have to come back for top-ups or return to your original breast size and shape. Hopefully, for me, white tees would then be out of style.

Pros, cons, pros, cons – I decided that this was the procedure for me as my objectives were clear: a) to wear a non-padded 34C comfortably; b) keep it natural-looking; c) improve the shape, tone, and firmness of my breasts; and d) achieve all of the above without surgery. Dr Huang then shows me the requisite before and after photographs – natural, perfect and pert anonymous breasts – and I'm signed on to joining this hall of fame.

With that, he proceeds to examine and measure me up – I had to submit an ultrasound prior to treatment for an all-clear. It's much like being at a dress designer's – Dr Huang does liken his work to art, after all – as the tape measure goes up and across, and pen markings are made around my breasts. “I'm thinking a minimum 50ml on each breast for you,” Dr Huang suggests, to which I ask him to double the dosage to make it worthwhile (actually, I have a low-cut, backless chiffon dress to slip into). He measures again, and prescribes 120ml on the left and 100ml on the right. I didn't know I had irregular breasts, but that's the beauty of Macrolane – it's like getting them done couture-style.

## Pins and Needles

The surgery is performed on the same day. I'm stripped to my waist, as Claire, my sexy blonde nurse (with real breasts) preps me with anaesthetic and antiseptic cream, and hands me a cocktail of about ten different kinds of medication including painkillers, antibiotics, anti-inflammatory, and anti-bruising. By the time Dr Huang arrives, I'm in a different state of mind. He is steady, serious, and calm, qualities anyone would look for in a doctor, and starts injecting the local anaesthetic in my left breast in a spoke-like fashion. He tells me that the treatment would take about an-hour-and-a-half, and reveals that it's a little longer and more tedious than surgical implants as it involves “forcing” the gel-like formula into the fibrous tissues. I finally realise what I'm about to go through when he whips out a thick canula of 10ml filler, “You'll need about ten of this on each breast,” he says, as I do the math

in my head and almost pass out. After the numbness sets in, he proceeds to inject the fillers as I stare into the light installation above and listen to sexy bossa nova. Twelve vials on the left, ten on the right, plenty of stories on tennis and travels, and we're done.

This is where the art comes in. Like a sculptor, Dr Huang moulds each breast, eyes narrowing, and hands in artistic motion. He stands me up, puts his finishing touches, and takes some photographs. My breasts look reasonably larger, but I find it difficult to check myself out in front of the doctor and two nurses. I get dressed – they give me a post-surgery (read: granny) bra that gives the most amazing support – and I'm on the flight home. Total treatment time: three hours.

## Healing Time

The next day, my breasts feel much larger and fuller, but I know that they're just swollen. Claire gives a care call, and advises me not to do any exercise until my follow-up check-up, to sleep on my back, and to wear the ugly bra at all times, even at night. Then, she slips in that I can go braless sometimes but should not wear any other bras, especially underwired ones as they could alter the shape of my new breasts. I try walking around braless in a sheer, white T-shirt, and must say, these babies look amazing. The other no-nos: baths (the surgical plasters are to be kept dry for one week); massages (no lying on the front); and sleeping on the side (only on your back until advised).

In about three days, some bruising starts to appear from the “rough” handling, which lasts for about ten days. With regular slathering of arnica cream and ten days of medication, the swelling and slight discomfort subside and my breasts look beautiful! Three weeks later, at my follow-up visit, I'm given the all-clear. Dr Huang tells me that I should expect my breasts to feel “soft and natural” within weeks as the filler fully absorbs into the tissues, and I'll start looking like I was “born with it.”

Surprisingly, the results are phenomenal for a little plumping up. I'm now back in my own bras and those sexy backless, low-cut dresses to great effect. Most of all, I'm thrilled to fill up my lacy bras perfectly – under those sheer, tight white tees, of course. ■

For more information on your nearest clinic, contact DKSH Malaysia at 03-7966 0288 or Pharmex at 088-724 989.